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SUBJECT: LIEN IN BEIJING: CHEN TO OFFER LOW-KEY RESPONSE

Classified By: AIT Acting Director David J. Keegan, Reason: 1.4 (B/D)

1. (C) Summary: The Chen administration plans a low-key reaction to KMT Chairman Lien Chan's Friday meeting with PRC President Hu Jintao in order to keep open options for a inter-party summit after Lien's return. Officials are generally relieved that Lien received no substantive "deliverables" during his April 29 summit with Hu. However, officials expressed disappointment over Lien's remarks at Beijing University, especially his criticism of Taiwan's democracy and reference to a KMT-Chinese Communist Party (CCP) united front against Taiwan independence. Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) Chairman Joseph Wu told reporters he was "surprised" and "disappointed" at Lien's decision to deliver a speech in Communist China critical of Taiwan's democratic achievements. Similar sentiments were expressed by Pan-Blue officials and media outlets. Several editorials warned that Lien's domestic political commentary could undermine the otherwise positive messages coming out of his visit. While Taiwan's National Security Council (NSC) has advised President Chen to avoid direct commentary, other senior officials plan to seek opportunities to portray Lien's April 29 speech and "five point" consensus in negative terms in order to influence the public and media environment in the immediate aftermath of the Lien visit. End Summary.

Chen to Offer Moderate Response

2. (C) President Chen Shui-bian did not offer an immediate public reaction to KMT Chairman Lien Chan's April 29 "five point" consensus with PRC President Hu Jintao. NSC Deputy Secretary General Henry Ko told AIT shortly before the

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Lien-Hu meeting that Chen agreed with the NSC's assessment that Beijing would like nothing more than for Lien's Beijing meeting to provoke another round of internal tensions. Ko said that the President also indicated that, no matter what Lien agrees to in Beijing, it is in the government's interest to keep the door open to a Chen-Lien summit after Lien's return from the Mainland.

3. (C) NSC Senior Advisor for cross-Strait relations Chen Chung-hsin provided AIT a readout of the April 29 evening NSC meeting convened to establish a formal response to the Lien-Hu "five points." Chen said that the general consensus was that the PRC succeeded in giving Lien "face" without giving him anything of substance. He noted that four of the five points agreed upon began with the term "promote," with the only "deliverable" an agreement to establish a party-to-party communications mechanism. According to Chen, MAC Chair Wu argued that the "five points" amounted to a clear violation of Taiwan's Cross-Strait Relations Statute. However, Chen was joined by Presidential Office Deputy Secretary General Ma Yung-chen in overturning Wu's suggestion

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of referring Lien to legal authorities. Instead, Wu was instructed to simply offer a public criticism of Lien for failing to convey the Taiwan people's support for the "ROC," opposition to the Anti-Secession Law, and wish for Mainland China to develop its own democratic institutions.

CCP-KMT United Front Against Taiwan Independence

4. (C) The NSC's Chen said the government also decided to have the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) take the "bad cop" role in responding to Lien's Beijing University speech. Earlier in the day, MAC Chair Wu expressed "shock" and "disappointment" over Lien's criticism of Taiwan's democratic institutions during his address. DPP Chairman Su Tseng-chang told reporters that Lien's endorsement of a KMT-CCP "united front" against Taiwan independence amounted to a rejection of the island's pluralistic democracy. The party's spokesman criticized Lien for "confusing the enemy country with his mother country." Premier Frank Hsieh told reporters that he is not overly concerned about Lien's meeting. However, Hsieh said it would have been better if Lien had not criticized Taiwan during his public remarks on the Mainland.

5. (SBU) Taiwan media and political commentary also focused on Lien's remark about a "united front with the CCP to block

Taiwan independence." The normally pro-Blue United Evening News criticized Lien's anti-independence statements in an April 29 editorial, warning that his language would not only increase internal tensions in Taiwan but also embarrass KMT moderates like Taipei Mayor Ma Ying-jeou and Legislative Speaker Wang Jin-pyng. The centrist China Times also editorialized that Lien's public criticism of Taiwan's democracy and President Chen threatened to obscure the more positive messages that emerged out of Lien's visit.

#### Pan-Blue Offers Low-Key Response

16. (C) There was little public commentary from senior KMT officials in Taipei, although Taipei Mayor Ma Ying-jeou did praise Lien's visit as a chance to advance cross-Straits understanding. Chou Chih-wei, an official at the KMT's National Policy Foundation, told AIT that Lien's trip in itself is good for cross-Straits stability, and has the potential to usher in a new period of "China Fever" with opportunities for further exchanges. However, Chou expressed disappointment that Lien chose to use his Beijing University speech to criticize the DPP. Chou said that for Lien's trip to have any significance beyond mere symbolic reconciliation between the KMT and CCP, something concrete must come from it. This, he acknowledged, means cooperating with the DPP government on follow-on actions. Chou added that if the current KMT leadership mishandles the follow-up to the Beijing meetings, the visit could backfire for the party politically.

17. (C) The Beijing University speech and outcome of the Lien-Hu talks have boosted expectations among DPP and People First Party (PFP) officials for the early May visit of PFP Chairman James Soong. The NSC's Chen told AIT that the PRC's decision to go light on substance with Lien might indicate a preference for dealing with Soong, and by indirect extension, President Chen. PFP Policy Chief Vincent Chang offered a similar assessment. Chang asserted that Beijing would not "waste" substantive offers on Lien, since they know the KMT Chairman would not convey any offer to the DPP government. In contrast, Chang said that the PFP has already discussed with PRC counterparts specific policy initiatives, such as ways to finesse the "1992 consensus," that would open the door to a real government-to-government dialogue (Septel).

#### Comment: Symbolism, but Little Substance

18. (C) The atmospherics for Lien's visit were decidedly positive, but Lien's inability to secure anything more than vague commitments for further consultations is likely to limit the bounce the KMT will get out of the visit. Other than his public agreement to the "1992 consensus" as a basis for future party-to-party talks, there was little in the Lien-Hu "five points" that President Chen has not talked about himself in public speeches. However, Lien's decision to criticize his domestic opponents is already tarnishing the otherwise constructive message in his Beijing University speech. With virtually all of Lien's aides (and both of his spokespersons) still at his side in Beijing, the DPP is likely to have the edge in shaping the weekend media message. The hard part will be to do so in a way that does not undermine the possibility for resuming contacts with the KMT after Lien returns on May 3.

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